



## City of Laguna Beach

Community Development  
Department

## INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FOR

# PROCESSING BUILDING PLANS

### **How are Building Plans processed?**

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Processing of plans begins when an owner or his or her representative arrives at City Hall with concept plans for a new project. This guide illustrates the process by assuming that project involves all phases of plan review.

The front counter staff will provide the applicant with a Development Review Application. Upon completion of this form, the applicant can submit the plans with the appropriate zoning submittal fees. At that time the information is entered into the computer for Zoning Division review.

### **Zoning Plan Check**

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This step entails a review by the Zoning Division staff to determine if the proposed structure is in compliance with zoning regulations. This involves a determination of the building setback from property lines, allowed height, required parking, open space and lot coverage and similar matters related to placing the building on the site. During this phase, City staff identifies any compliance problems and variances that might be necessary. Following this review and the satisfaction of any corrections that might be required, the project can be scheduled for a Public Hearing before the Board of Adjustment/Design Review Board.

Not all submittals provide all of the information that is required. When additional information is needed, the applicant is notified by telephone (or by postcard) that some corrections to the plans or additional materials are required. The applicant should return to City Hall to collect the correction list and plans and correct them for a re-submittal. This process of correction and re-submittal may sometimes occur two or three (or more) times between City staff and the applicant, if necessary information is not provided.

### **Environmental Review**

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Following the Zoning Plan Check, City staff reviews the plans for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and makes a determination as to which review category, (i.e. categorically exempt, negative declaration or environmental impact report), the project should be classified. Also identified are any special studies that may be required, (i.e. geotechnical, hydrology, grading plan, etc.), and required public improvements, such as street pavement, curb, gutter, etc. When this process is completed, the application is then scheduled for Design Review.

## **Design Review**

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When all the necessary information is provided, City staff contacts the applicant to set a hearing date at the applicant's convenience (a minimum two week period for notifying neighboring property owners must be allowed). The Board of Adjustment/Design Review Board meets every Thursday evening, with a few exceptions, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The Board of Adjustment reviews variances and also sits as the Design Review Board to review building designs, grading permits and projects within environmentally sensitive areas. On the selected date, the Board holds a public hearing regarding the project. The applicant and anyone else wishing to speak may address the Board which, after the hearing, discusses the application and takes action on it.

## **Appeal of Board's Action**

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If someone within a neighborhood, a City Council member or the applicant appeals the decision of the Board within fourteen days from the date of the hearing, it will go to the Council for final action. The Council holds a public hearing on the appeal and decides to either overturn or uphold the Board's decision.

## **State Agency Review**

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If the project is subject to a Coastal Development Permit, it is now ready to be taken to the State Coastal Commission for its review. If the project involves work on Pacific Coast Highway or Laguna Canyon Road, a Caltrans permit may also be needed. While the project is being reviewed by the State agency, the final working drawings may be submitted with the plan check fee to City staff along with the completed building permit application.

## **Structural Plan Review**

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This phase of the process begins with the submission of two sets each of geotechnical reports, structural and energy calculations and completed structural drawings. These documents are reviewed by the plan checker, who examines them for compliance with various state and local building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical codes.

When all these elements are reviewed and found to be adequate, the structural plans, including any street improvement plans, are ready for a final review. Each division indicates final approval by signing the building permit. At this time, the building permit is ready to be issued and all the appropriate fees are paid before issuance.

**For more information contact:  
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